

Editors' Introduction

Transnational Broadcasting

Historical studies from an international, global, transnational, or comparative angle have become increasingly popular in recent decades—all aspects of the “international turn” in historiographical writing. This collection takes its cue from Isabel Hofmeyr’s description of the transnational approach as being primarily concerned “with movements, flows, and circulation,” and with interrogating “historical processes” that are “constructed in the movement between places, sites, and regions.”¹

In 2018, ten years after Kate Lacey made a case for studying the history of radio “as part of a wider matrix of communications media, rather than in isolation, and in cross cultural and cross-national contexts,” Lacey noted the growing number of cultural histories of transnational radio broadcasting.² Transnational perspectives on the history of broadcasting more broadly are burgeoning internationally.³ Michele Hilmes has pointed to the “inherent transnationalism” of broadcasting, which is compelled “to provide a conduit to speak to other nations and to let other influences stream into the national space.” These impulses are held in tension with the equally important responsibilities to disseminate national culture and to resist “foreign” or other unwanted cultural influences. The task of the “transnational media historian,” Hilmes suggests, is to pursue the usual flows of texts and people, but also to consider economic and institutional aspects of cultural production. “The study of broadcasting—particularly understood as a transnational form—requires attention to the sphere of politics and economics as much as to matters of creative influence, the development of aesthetic practices and forms, and their social and cultural reception.”⁴ A more multifaceted approach to broadcasting history is perhaps required, one that recognizes that flows of media content, ideas, and people can take multiple and complex pathways. This special issue addresses the considerations raised above, and extends from Hilmes’s focus on social transformation within British and US broadcasting as well as recent scholarship on transnational media cultures to consider gender and broadcasting in other contexts, including Europe,

Latin America, Canada, and the Asia-Pacific.⁵ The collection brings together scholars concerned with gender and broadcasting within media history to see what transnational perspectives can bring to understandings of media content, mobility, and labor. While they highlight the relation between gender and transnational broadcasting, they also seek to understand how class, race, and nationality intersect with gender in broadcasting history.

Several articles in this collection derive from research presented at the “Cross-Currents: Gender and Transnational Broadcasting” workshop held at Bournemouth University in July 2017. Many of the themes that emerged there are drawn out here, including women as media workers, feminization of broadcasting, archives, internationalism, intimacy, contestation of public and private spheres, and national identity. The speakers came from as far afield as Turkey, the Netherlands, Australia, Switzerland, and the UK, but it was notable that across the papers many of the same women were discussed, demonstrating the value of international conversations, and of researching women’s broadcasting careers within a global framework.

So why look specifically at gender and transnational broadcasting? In recent years, feminist historians have researched the role of gender in the development of broadcasting within national narratives and contexts.⁶ Australian scholars Catherine Fisher, Jeannine Baker, Justine Lloyd, and Kylie Andrews have demonstrated that women working in broadcasting publicly engaged with a range of national and international issues of concern to women, including feminist and peace activism and indigenous rights.⁷ Other new research has highlighted the experiences of “below the line” or less visible women workers in the broader media industry, including broadcast engineers, sound workers, archivists, and costume designers.⁸ As Kristin Skoog and Alexander Badenoch have previously argued, a transnational approach is particularly valuable for histories of women in national and international broadcasting, since it uncovers forms of social networking not only among women broadcasters but also commonly associated with international women’s organizations.⁹ The ways that women in broadcasting tactically engaged with international connections are highlighted in this issue. Yves Rees and Justine Lloyd both consider the internationalist aspirations of Australian broadcaster and feminist Irene Greenwood. Lloyd also discusses another Australian broadcaster, Catherine King, a key member of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT), the focus of the article by Alexander Badenoch and Kristin Skoog in this issue. Badenoch and Skoog also point to the IAWRT’s connection with Elizabeth Long of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, who was also an active

member of the International Council of Women, as discussed by Lloyd. Other members of the IAWRT included Janet Quigley and Isa Benzie, who both made their mark in the interwar period in the BBC's Foreign Department, as outlined here by Kate Murphy.

A focus on gender allows us to explore how media content, and especially programming for women, can serve as a point of departure for extending our understanding of international relations and forms of cultural and public diplomacy. Rees and Christine Ehrick both explore radio programs with a pro-US agenda. Rees examines the Australian women who took on an ambassadorial role through developing radio programs that reflected and promoted Australia's mid-century cultural and geopolitical shift away from Britain and toward the United States. Ehrick looks at how women's broadcasting became an important vehicle for US government campaigns aimed at Latin American women during World War II and the early stages of the Cold War. Ehrick, Yingzi Wang, and Sabina Mihelj also discuss how constructions of models of femininity and womanhood appealed to middle-class ideals. Wang and Mihelj, for example, examine how Chinese television dramas responded to the country's transformations in relation to the economy and class structure, but were still loyal to official ideology and therefore promoted socialist ideals of gender equality that also reflected middle-class aspirations with an emphasis on consumption.

This collection also builds on histories of gendered labor in broadcasting such as the "Gendered Discrimination in the Creative Industries" issue of *Feminist Media Histories*, edited by Vicky Ball and Laraine Porter in fall 2018, part of the "swell of feminist work that attempts to cover the work of women and the associated gender politics that have structured their experiences within the media industries."¹⁰ But the mobility of broadcasting staff across national borders, and the ways that broadcasting structures encouraged connections and movement between personnel, have been little researched from a gendered perspective. Two authors in this collection respond to Hilmes's suggestion that paying attention to the movement of individuals between national settings and media industries can reveal how transnationality, and also transmediality, "function at ground level."¹¹ Jeannine Baker considers labor mobility across the British Empire by Australian women working in broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s, and Rees examines Australian women who drew upon their experiences living, working, or studying in the United States to create radio programs that reflected and promoted closer geopolitical ties between the two nations. Both articles also illuminate the centrality of mobility and broadcasting to a modernizing world.

Researching the global careers of subjects often necessitates accessing public and private archives that also stretch across state borders. The frequent gendered gaps in public collections means that researchers of women's history often must turn to alternative sources to track the lives and work of female subjects. Baker, Rees, Ehrick, Murphy, and Lloyd all relied on institutional archives, including the National Archives of Australia, the US National Archives, the BBC Written Archives Centre, and Library and Archives Canada, but personal papers have also proven vital. Baker benefited from access to a private family archive to track the career of Peggie Broadhead in public broadcasting organizations in Australia, Malaya, and Britain, and Lloyd mined Irene Greenwood's personal papers held at the Murdoch University Library in Western Australia. Badenoch and Skoog's article draws on the personal papers and correspondence of the Dutch feminist Wilhelmina (Lilian) Posthumus-van der Goot, cofounder of the International Archives of the Women's Movement (*Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging*) and onetime head of women's radio programming at the *Algemeene Vereeniging Radio Omroep* (AVRO), whose papers are held at the Atria Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History in Amsterdam. Murphy's research was also greatly enriched by her access to personal information provided by Isa Benzie's family.

The special issue opens with a broader methodological reflection on gender and transnational broadcasting. In "Lessons from Lilian: Is Transnational (Media) History a Gendered Issue?," Alexander Badenoch and Kristin Skoog reflect on their transnational collaborative research project on the IAWRT, founded in the early 1950s. They take us through a series of methodological directions in developing an entangled history of women in broadcasting. They argue for the need to "decenter" media in order to locate them within other relevant fields of women's history such as international feminisms, women's biographies, and entangled identities—and here non-media-centric archives play a crucial role.

Constructions of womanhood and femininity, shaped by both domestic developments and transnational trends, are illuminated in Yingzi Wang and Sabina Mihelj's article "A Socialist Superwoman for the New Era: Chinese Television and the Changing Ideals of Femininity." The authors trace changing representations of women in Chinese television dramas since the early 1990s and argue that these dramas were not simply shaped or influenced by "Western" or "bourgeois" cultural gender ideals, as has often been thought. Chinese television drama promoted, and would continue to promote, a femininity based on classic Communist ideals of gender equality, especially the idea

of the socialist-style “superwoman.” By placing Chinese television dramas within the framework of global socialist media cultures, Wang and Mihelj highlight how these dramas resonate with ideals of femininity found in TV dramas produced in socialist Eastern Europe during the 1970s and 1980s.

Christine Ehrick’s article “*Buenas Vecinas?: Latin American Women and US Radio Propaganda during World War II*” takes a transnational perspective to demonstrate gendered dimensions of public diplomacy during the era of Good Neighbor policy. Ehrick reveals that US government campaigns targeted Latin American middle-class women with radio programs that promoted and projected images of modern US womanhood. Female listeners were seen as a priority in pro-US propaganda efforts, and some of the programming was also influenced by US feminists and women’s organizations; hence inter-American women’s networks also contributed to this output. Certain genres especially popular among Latin American women, such as the *radionovela* (serial melodrama), became an appropriate target for US propaganda. By focusing on gendered programming, Ehrick’s research furthers our understanding of political and social relations in the Americas during this key period.

In “Making Waves Across the Pacific: Women, Radio Broadcasting, and Australian-US Relations,” Yves Rees also considers the importance of radio to international relations, and expands our understanding of how women broadcasters used radio as a platform to inform and galvanize listeners about international topics of interest to women. Rees analyzes a range of women’s radio programs, including the long-running *American Letter*, broadcast fortnightly by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and presented by US-based Australian Jean Wilmot Bemis. They find that Australian women’s broadcasting programs, despite being focused on feminized topics, had definite geopolitical aspirations, and promoted and reflected Australia’s midcentury reorientation to the United States.

The next three articles focus on women’s work in public broadcasting in the first half of the twentieth century. In “Relay Women: Isa Benzie, Janet Quigley and the BBC’s Foreign Department, 1930–38,” Kate Murphy uncovers the work of two key figures in the BBC’s Foreign Department, and situates their careers within the broader narrative of women’s work in the early BBC, which was “remarkably progressive” while also reflecting sexual stereotypes and discrimination. Murphy focuses on Quigley and Benzie’s contribution to the development of international relays—the provision of facilities and exchange of programs between different countries. BBC senior management recognized Benzie’s considerable skills, illustrated by her negotiations with a range of demanding overseas

organizations over the broadcasting arrangements for two major events: the 1936 Berlin Olympics and the coronation of King George VI in 1937. Through the experiences of Benzie and Quigley, Murphy shows that the interwar BBC offered talented women the chance to succeed in traditionally male-dominated areas.

In “Australian Women Working in British Broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s,” Jeannine Baker analyzes the connections between gender, labor, and mobility in broadcasting by tracing the transnational careers of two Australian women, Muriel Howlett and Peggie Broadhead. Both drew on their knowledge and experience of Australia for their work producing media content for English-speaking audiences overseas, which Baker argues resulted in the formation of a new transnational identity of “Dominions broadcaster.” She also finds that the BBC offered Australian women superior pay and working conditions, and the chance to succeed in areas of broadcasting that were closed to women at the Australian Broadcasting Commission in the 1930s and 1940s, such as news.

In our final article, “A Girdle of Thought Thrown around the World: International Aspirations in Women’s Programming in Australia and Canada,” Justine Lloyd examines the transnational orientations of a set of public-service radio programs aimed at women, a form that refigured the relationships between home, world, and nation. Lloyd shows that the female hosts drew on their own experiences within international feminist organizations, and their self-identification as modern world citizens, to transcend national interests and link ordinary women’s lives with the flow of international events. Elizabeth Long at CBC and Irene Greenwood at ABC challenged the separation of spheres and sought to extend women’s agency through the alignment of gender issues with international solidarities. Lloyd reveals that the women’s engagement with international affairs also led to management scrutiny, and in some cases censure, and argues that the broadcasting organizations were constrained by nascent international Cold War politics as well as national demands that framed women as passive recipients of instructional programming.

This collection of essays explores the relationship between gender and transnational broadcasting in North America, Latin America, Australia, Britain, and China, interweaving themes of mobility, labor, international affairs, nationality, class, modernity, race, programming, and the contestation of private and public spheres. Like many of the historical subjects we have encountered, we have benefited from international mobility and connections, while recognizing that not all scholars have the opportunity for international collaboration. We hope that this collection encourages more scholarly conversations around questions

of gender and broadcasting history, and the sharing of resources and knowledge across borders. ■

JEANNINE BAKER is a historian and postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Media, Music, Communication, and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney. She researches the history of women's labor in the media industries. She is the author of *Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam* (NewSouth, 2015), and she coedited (with Justine Lloyd) the special issue of *Media International Australia* devoted to "Gendered Labour and Media" (2016). In 2018, while a British Academy visiting fellow at the University of Sussex, she coedited (with Kate Murphy) a website on the pioneering women of the BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/women-pioneers>.

KATE MURPHY is a principal academic at Bournemouth University, where she has worked since 2012. Prior to her academic career she worked for the BBC for twenty-four years, primarily as a producer on *Radio 4 Woman's Hour*. She is the author of *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

KRISTIN SKOOG is a senior lecturer in media history in the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University. She is interested in the social and cultural history of broadcasting, the role of radio and other media in postwar reconstruction, and women's radio and women broadcasters in Britain and Europe.

NOTES

1. C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connolly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1444.

2. Kate Lacey, "Up in the Air? The Matter of Radio Studies," *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* 16, no. 2 (2018): 112–13. The earlier work referenced is Kate Lacey, "Ten Years of Radio Studies: The Very Idea," *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* 6, no. 1 (2008): 21–32.

3. See for example Michele Hilmes, "Foreword: Transnational Radio in the Global Age," *Journal of Radio Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004), iii–vi; Andreas Fickers and Catherine Johnson, eds., *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach* (London: Routledge 2012); Jamie Medhurst, Sian Nicholas, and Tom O'Malley, *Broadcasting in the UK and US in the 1950s: Historical Perspectives* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); Golo Föllmer and Alexander Badenoch, eds., *Transnationalizing Radio Research: New Approaches to an Old Medium* (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript, 2018); the special issue of *Media History* 21, no. 4 (2015) on "Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting: The BBC's Foreign-Language Services during the Second World War," ed. Nelson Ribeiro and Stephanie Seul; Alexander Badenoch, Andreas Fickers, and Christian Henrich-Franke, eds., *Airy Curtains in the European Ether* (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos, 2013); Sabina Mihelj and Simon Huxtable, "Television and the Shaping of Transnational Memories: A Cold War History," *Image and Narrative* 18, no. 1 (2017): 33–44.

4. Michele Hilmes, *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting* (New York and Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 2, 8.

5. Recent scholarship includes Annabelle Sreberny, "Gender, Globalization and Communications: Women and the Transnational," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, no. 1

(2001): 61–65; Youna Kim, “Female Individualization?: Transnational Mobility and Media Consumption of Asian Women,” *Media, Culture and Society* 32, no. 1 (2010): 25–43; Purnima Mankekar, *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

6. See for example Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923–1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 130–82; Kate Murphy, *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Justine Lloyd, *Gender and Media in the Broadcast Age: Women’s Radio Programming at the BBC, CBC, and ABC* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, forthcoming 2019); Christine Ehrick, *Radio and the Gendered Soundscape: Women and Broadcasting in Argentina and Uruguay, 1930–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

7. Catherine Fisher, “World Citizens: Australian Women’s Internationalist Broadcasts, 1930–1939,” *Women’s History Review* 27 (2018): <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2018.1506554>; Jeannine Baker, “Woman to Woman: Australian Feminists’ Embrace of Radio Broadcasting, 1930s–1950s,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 93 (2017): 292–308; Justine Lloyd, “Intimate Empire: Radio Programming for Women in Postwar Australia and Canada,” *Storytelling* 6, no. 2 (2007): 131–42; Kylie Andrews, “Australian Broadcasting’s Female ‘Pilgrims’: Women and Work in the Post-War ABC” (PhD diss., University of Technology Sydney, 2019).

8. Melanie Bell, “Learning to Listen: Histories of Women’s Soundwork in the British Film Industry,” *Screen* 58, no. 4 (2017): 437–57; Emma Sandon, “Engineering Difference: Women’s Accounts of Working as Technical Assistants in the BBC Television Service between 1945 and 1955,” *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no. 4 (2018): 8–32; Carolyn Birdsall, “Divisions of Labour: Radio Archiving as Gendered Work in Wartime Britain and Germany,” in *Gender and Archiving: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Noortje Willems, Sylvia Holla, Eveline Buchheim, Saskia Bultman, Marjan Groot, Evelien Walhout, and Ingrid de Zwart (Hilversum, the Netherlands: Verloren, 2017); Helen Warner, “Below-the-(Hem)line: Storytelling as Collective Resistance in Costume Design,” *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no. 1 (2018): 37–57.

9. Kristin Skoog and Alexander Badenoch, “Networking Women: The International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT),” in *Broadcasting in the UK and US in the 1950s: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Jamie Medhurst, Sian Nicholas, and Tom O’Malley (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 189–218.

10. Vicky Ball and Melanie Bell, “Working Women, Women’s Work: Production, History, Gender,” *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 10, no. 3 (2013): 547.

11. Michele Hilmes, “Entangled Media Histories: A Response,” *Media History* 23, no. 1 (2017): 142.